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COPY TO

LE FIGARO: WEST'S MILITARY INTERVENTION IN OIL STATES 'UNTHINKABLE'

L241056 PARIS LE FIGARO IN FRENCH 8 OCT 74 PP 1,2 L

(GENERAL BEAUFRE ARTICLE: "TOWARD CONFRONTATION IN THE OIL CRISIS? REFLECTIONS ON THE 'UNTHINKABLE'")

(TEXT) IN HIS LAST ARTICLE RAYMOND ARON ALLUDES TO WHAT NEWSWEEK CALLS "THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE," THAT IS, A MILITARY OPERATION TO SEIZE THE ARAB OIL WELLS AND GAIN CONTROL OF THEM. IT SEEMS THAT THIS TEMPTATION DOES IN FACT EXIST IN CERTAIN U.S. CIRCLES. IT IS NOT WITHOUT INTEREST TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OR, MORE PRECISELY, THE FEASIBILITY OF SUCH AN OPERATION.

CONTRARY TO WHAT MIGHT BE THOUGHT A PRIORI, THE OCCUPATION OF THE MAIN WELL ZONES SOUTH OF THE PERSIAN GULF DOES NOT APPEAR TO PRESENT INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTIES; KUWAIT, BAHRAIN, QATAR, THE OILFIELDS OF SAUDI ARABIA, AND THOSE OF ABU DHABI ARE QUITE CLOSE TOGETHER AND LINKED WITH THE EXPORTING PORTS BY RELATIVELY SHORT PIPELINES (RANGING FROM A FEW KILOMETERS TO JUST OVER 100 KILOMETERS).

IT WOULD THEREFORE BE POSSIBLE TO OCCUPY THEM, AT A PRICE, AND TO PROTECT THE INSTALLATIONS AGAINST SABOTAGE. THIS COULD NECESSITATE SOMETHING OF THE ORDER OF 10,000 MEN FOR EACH GROUP OF TARGETS PLUS AN AIRBORNE RESERVE OF THE SAME SIZE TO INTERVENE IN STRENGTH WHERE NECESSARY. THIS MEANS A TOTAL OF APPROXIMATELY 60,000 MEN AND QUITE A LARGE AIR FORCE. THE MAINTENANCE OF SUCH A FORCE IN THE GULF ZONE WOULD UNDENIABLY REPRESENT A HEAVY BURDEN FROM THE MILITARY VIEWPOINT.

FIRST, HOWEVER, THIS OCCUPATION COULD DO NOTHING TO PREVENT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BIB SAUDI PIPELINES TO THE MEDITERRANEAN AND, EVEN LESS, THAT OF THE IRAQI PIPELINES, WHICH WOULD SERIOUSLY HAMPER THE SUPPLY OF OIL TO EUROPE. THIS IS A MAJOR DRAWBACK.

IN ADDITION AND ABOVE ALL, THE OCCUPATION OF THE OIL INSTALLATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE CARRIED OUT EVERYWHERE SIMULTANEOUSLY AND BY SURPRISE IN ORDER TO AVOID THE PREVENTIVE SABOTAGE WHICH, WE WE KNOW IN THE CASE OF KUWAIT, HAS BEEN PREPARED. THE ONLY SOLUTION WOULD THEREFORE BE A BAST AIRBORNE OPERATION, A SORT OF OIL ARNHEM, DESIGNED TO ALLOW THE APPROACH OF THE AIR FORCE AND THE SIMULTANEOUS DROPPING OF GROUND FORCES. HERE ABSOLUTE IMPOSSIBILITIES ARISE: THE AMERICANS HAVE ONLY ONE DIVISION, THE 81ST (AS PUBLISHED): CAPABLE OF PARACHUTE OPERATIONS; IN ADDITION, THE AVAILABLE AIRBASES ARE VERY FAR AWAY--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ISRAEL AND IRAN--AND THE AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, WHOSE APPROACH WOULD NOT BE FOR RELEASE 2006/03/17 SECRET 80B01495R000200150016-0 INADEQUATE CAPACITY FOR THE NECESSARY 60,000 MEN.

UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE OCCUPATION OF THE OIL SOURCES WOULD HAVE TO BE PROGRESSIVE, WHICH WOULD VERY PROBABLY GIVE RISE TO A LARGE AMOUNT OF PREVENTIVE DESTRUCTION, NOT TO MENTION THE OIL BLOCKADE WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY BE IMPOSED BY THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY LIBYA AND ALGERIA..... UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT MAY BE CONCLUDED THAT FROM A PURELY TECHNICAL VIEWPOINT SUCH AN OPERATION CANNOT BE ENVISAGED. THIS MUST BE CLEARLY SEEN. IT IS DOUBTLESS NOT UNPROFITABLE TO DEMONSTRATE IT.

BUT IF THE OPERATION APPEARS TECHNICALLY IMPOSSIBLE, IT IS ESPECIALLY CATASTROPHIC ON THE PLANE OF THE OVERALL POLITICAL SITUATION, THAT IS, THE TOTAL STRATEGY WHICH DOMINATES THE KIND OF PEACETIME WAR OF OUR TIME.

INDEPENDENTLY OF THE MORAL TABOOS ESTABLISHED AFTER WORLD WAR I, WHOSE IMPORTANCE SHOULD NOT BE MINIMIZED, A MILITARY SEIZURE OF THE OIL SOURCES SOUTH OF THE PERSIAN GULF WOULD MEAN-- ONCE AGAIN--THROWING INTO THE ARMS OF THE SOVIETS, NEIGHBOURS OF THIS ZONE IN CAUCASIA, THE RICHEST AND CURRENTLY MOST PRO-WESTERN ARAB STATES.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS FALSE MOVE WOULD MORE THAN COMPENSATE FOR THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF THE USSR IN EGYPT LAST YEAR. VERY PROBABLY THE RESULT WOULD BE NOT ONLY A SHIFT BY THE ARAB WORLD AS A WHOLE BUT ALSO THE OPENING OF A NEW MILITARY ABSCESS OF THE VIETNAM TYPE, WITH THE MORE OR LESS DIRECT SUPPORT OF THE USSR. THIS WOULD REALLY BE A CASE OF HAVING ACTED WITH AN INSANE RASHNESS LEADING TO INCALCULABLE CONSEQUENCES.

THEREFORE CERTAIN PEOPLE ARE THINKING, ACCORDING TO THE MODERN STYLE OF WARFARE BY INTERMEDIARIES, OF INTERVENTION BY IRAN AND ISRAEL. FIRST THERE IS NO PROOF THAT IRAN, WHICH IS STEPPING UP THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS ARMED FORCES, IS PREPARED TO PLAY THIS GAME. IRAN IS AIMING AT DOMINATION OF THE PERSIAN GULF FOR ITS OWN BENEFIT, NOT THAT OF THIRD PARTIES.

AS FOR THE USE OF THE ISRAELIS IN THE OIL PROBLEM, THIS WOULD LEAD THEM UP A BLIND ALLEY BY FINALLY REMOVING ALL POSSIBILITY OF A COMPROMISE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD AND THUS ALL FUTURE PROSPECTS, SUPPOSING THAT ISRAEL COULD DO ANYTHING OTHER THAN CONFRONT EGYPT AND SYRIA.

IN CONCLUSION, LET US RETURN TO THE LEVEL OF REASONABLE PROSPECTS. THIS EXCURSION INTO THE "UNTHINKABLE" SHOWS THE ENORMOUS RISKS AND THE IMPOSSIBILITIES OF A SOLUTION BY FORCE. ONCE AGAIN THE SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEM OF OIL CARRIES WITH IT ONLY POLITICAL SOLUTIONS AND THAT IS DOUBTLESS THE BEST WAY.

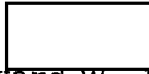
24 OCT 1259Z RK/CH

file Defense

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Andrew Marshall
Director of Net Assessment
Department of Defense

Andy--

I am attaching the Figaro article you
requested for Secretary Schlesinger.


Edward W. Proctor
Deputy Director for Intelligence

24 October 1974
(DATE)

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Date: 23 Oct 74

TO : Messrs. Proctor/Walsh

FROM :

SUBJECT: Schlesinger Request for Figaro Article

Andy Marshall called this afternoon to say that Schlesinger had been told by a French visitor of an article that appeared about ten days ago in Le Figaro. The piece is by General (Ret.) Andre Baufre (spelling uncertain) and concerns the feasibility of US interdiction or seizure of oil production facilities in the Middle East. English version is preferable, but French will do.

I called [] who said he would try to get the article for us.

[] tried all the sources she's aware of. Latest issue available at the Library of Congress is 1 September! Meanwhile, [] people have searched all October issues, and are working on September. They are also looking at Le Monde.

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